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ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography comprises 13 items in the ERIC system concerning improving teacher effectiveness. Items cited discuss strategies including an objectives-based instructional program combined with mastery learning, teacher self-assessment techniques, administrators' role in helping teachers adopt more effective practices, improving teachers' questioning abilities, computer-assisted active learning, coaching of teachers in inservice programs, a competency-based instructional improvement program, and structured conversation as a source of professional growth. Theoretical analyses include characteristics of classroom effectiveness, the inability of researchers to establish the extent of teachers' contribution to learning, teaching supervision, and principals' leadership in school improvement. (MJL)

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The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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Improving Teacher Effectiveness

1 **Abrams, Joan D.** "Precise Teaching Is More Effective Teaching." *Educational Leadership*, 39, 2 (November 1981), pp. 138-9. EJ 255 087.

What can an objectives-based instructional program combined with mastery learning do for your school? In the Red Bank (New Jersey) Public Schools such a program significantly increased the percentage of students in grades 2-8 who passed statewide tests. Abrams, the superintendent at Red Bank, here explains how the district's program made teaching more "precise," and thus more effective in achieving district objectives.

First, the district identified just what its objectives would be. "In pupil behavior terms, we defined exactly what we wished the learner to be able to do or to know, and these objectives became the basis of our instructional program."

All instructional materials were then analyzed to determine whether they helped students toward these objectives. Teacher-made materials suddenly took on new importance, as teachers compiled materials from various sources to make cohesive learning units. Published materials ordered by teachers were carefully scrutinized for their relevance to district objectives.

Teachers are expected to plan an instructional unit fully before beginning instruction, instead of "planning from week to week." Each objectives-based unit takes three to ten or more days to complete. Teachers report that this requirement makes them "better organized and more focused," according to Abrams.

In beginning a unit, teachers describe the objectives of the unit to students and explain why they are working on it. They then teach to that objective, model "desired behavioral outcomes," and provide guided and independent practice with the concepts.

Evaluation is continuous and is based on mastery-learning principles. Students who do not master the objectives initially are taught using different strategies and materials, while those who master the objectives early are given enrichment activities.

2 **Bailey, Gerald D.** *Teacher Self-Assessment: A Means for Improving Classroom Instruction. Analysis and Action Series.* Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1981. 74 pages. ED 207 967.

The principal's burden of attempting to improve teacher effectiveness throughout the school could be significantly reduced if teachers themselves would take responsibility for their own self-improvement. This booklet is intended for those do-it-yourself teachers who are interested in improving their own instruction. If made available to a school's staff and its use encouraged, this publication by itself could help improve instruction without much further effort by the principal. A much greater impact would likely be felt if a supervisor actively incorporated some of Bailey's ideas into the school's overall instructional improvement program.

Bailey defines teacher self-assessment as "the process of self-examination in which the teacher utilizes a series of sequential feedback strategies for the purpose of instructional self-improvement." The success of this approach, of course, depends on the teacher's acquisition of abilities to assess his or her own classroom teaching and to make intelligent decisions regarding constructive change. The seven-step process of improvement Bailey explains is meant to build these specific abilities.

Step one is a critique of the myths surrounding teacher self-evaluation, such as "personal reflection is an effective strategy in teacher self-assessment," and "objectivity is impossible to achieve in teacher self-assessment." Step two covers the use of the feedback devices needed for self-assessment—either videotape or audiotape recorders.

Steps three through five explain many of the principles and techniques involved in analyzing taped lessons, such as the concepts of "set" and "domain" and the analysis of verbal and nonverbal teaching behaviors. Step six explains how change in teacher behaviors can be structured using "means-referenced objectives," and step seven discusses the use of evaluation forms while viewing or listening to taped lessons.

3 **Brandt, Ron.** "On Improving Teacher Effectiveness: A Conversation with David Berliner." *Educational Leadership*, 40, 1 (October 1982), pp. 12-15. EJ 269 890.

David Berliner was the director of California's Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study, which found that students' "time-on-task" was directly related to achievement. In this interview, he explains the "one best way" that administrators can help teachers increase time on task and adapt other effective teaching practices as well: *work with teachers in their classrooms.*

Berliner has tried disseminating knowledge about effective teaching practices by making presentations or by simply telling teachers how to make better use of time. But "teachers already know these things," says Berliner. "They've heard about them in methods courses; they've been preached to. But nothing happens until someone gets the teacher to specify what he or she is going to do, and then monitors and helps the teacher look at the effects."

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To get teachers to specify their goals, Berliner recommends the use of a precise set of consultation techniques developed by John Bergan. These techniques are "designed to elicit from the client both a statement of the problem and a statement of intent to change it." Using this approach, teachers are forced to think for themselves about both problems and solutions.

Principals and other teacher supervisors should then concentrate their energies on "in-class coaching." They should "bring in fewer speakers and instead have someone in classrooms helping teachers make changes." This is a time-consuming approach, Berliner admits, but "they won't get much change" without it.

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4 **Hughes, Carolyn Sue.** "Staff Development for Building Student Thinking Skills." *Educational Leadership*, 39, 1 (October 1981), pp. 48-51. EJ 253 755.

5 **Hyman, Ronald.** "Questioning for Improved Reading." *Educational Leadership*, 39, 4 (January 1982), pp. 307-309. EJ 257 909.

A number of studies have pointed out deficiencies in teachers' questioning techniques following class reading assignments. In particular, teachers often ask questions designed to stimulate simple recall of facts instead of critical thinking about what was read. These two articles further explain this deficiency and describe administrative actions that can improve students' thinking skills by improving teachers' questioning abilities.

Hyman presents a dozen specific guidelines for student questioning under three headings: selecting the student to respond, phrasing the question, and expecting a response. Hyman also provides advice for helping teachers develop overall "strategies for questioning," presents one such strategy applicable to works of fiction, and describes the benefits of stimulating students to ask their own questions.

Hughes describes a staff development program in Shaker Heights, Ohio, that was specifically designed "to improve student reading comprehension by improving teacher questioning skills." With the help of the training leaders, participating teachers learned strategies for teaching thinking skills, analyzed model lessons, and planned actual lessons using the strategies they had learned. Trainers also observed each participating teacher at least four times in the classroom.

Evaluation of teacher behavior before and after the staff development programs "indicated that teachers had indeed made significant changes in their teaching behavior." Students of these teachers "asked more questions above the literal level," "gave more complex responses," and supported their inferences more frequently "by citing evidence from experiences, generalizations, or authorities."

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6 **Huitt, William C., and Segars, John K.** *Characteristics of Effective Classrooms.* Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools, October 1980. 32 pages. ED 207 216.

In the past decade the emphasis of research on effective schools has shifted from the study of "inputs"—such as student SES, teacher experience, and so forth—to the study of "classroom processes." This new research on processes has identified four characteristics of classrooms that are strongly related to student achievement. Huitt and Segars here discuss these characteristics and the research supporting them, review several models of instruction that incorporate these characteristics, and draw implications for teacher inservice and other administrative actions.

The first line of research that the authors examine has found that effective teachers "design and implement instruction in relation to specific student characteristics." In other words, the teacher individualizes the curriculum to some extent based on students' prior knowledge and skills and on their particular learning styles.

The last three characteristics of effective classrooms have been defined together by some researchers as "academic learning time"—the "amount of time a student spends on criterion-relevant content which he or she can perform with relatively few errors." Huitt and Segars break this definition down as follows: effective teachers teach the knowledge and skills that are measured by the achievement tests; students are engaged in learning for an "appropriate" period of time each day; and students experience a moderate to high success rate in whatever they're doing.

These findings are useful as a focus for supervision, the authors contend, because they can be readily observed and measured, because they are "common-sense" to most educators, and because they are closely related to other important aspects of the classroom and school. A closing section briefly outlines some possible topics for inservice training when deficiencies in the four characteristics are observed.

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7 **Jernstedt, G. Christian.** "Active Learning Increases Educational Effectiveness and Efficiency." *Technological Horizons in Education*, 9, 4 (May 1982), pp. 97-100, 105. EJ 263 698.

Over the past few decades, a large amount of research evidence has accumulated on the subject of effective teaching techniques. When summarized and integrated, says Jernstedt, a somewhat surprising conclusion results: "Students' acquisition of knowledge does not seem to be effected by differences in curriculum, methods of instruction, styles of the teacher in the classroom, or use of technology." But student achievement is clearly linked to another important factor: the amount of time that students are actively engaged with the content of the curriculum. Active engagement in learning depends largely on availability of the teacher to monitor student progress, present new materials, and so forth.

This situation can be greatly improved, says Jernstedt, by utilizing an existing cost-effective technology that can significantly increase students' engagement in learning while greatly reducing the "administrative" and "clerical" time that takes up so much of a teacher's time. This technology is, of course, a computer system, but the system described here by Jernstedt has several advantages over most existing computer-assisted instruction configurations. For example, eight students utilize the same microcomputer at once, using separate telephone-like keyboards. Moreover, the entire system can fit on a small cart. Both factors significantly reduce the overall cost, and the computer is never overloaded.

The computer is also extremely simple to use. The teacher directs students to the computer, inserts a magnetic disc, and eight students are on their way through an interactive lesson. While the teacher goes on to other duties, the computer uses a sophisticated diagnostic system "to collect, update, and summarize records on each student's performance." When the lesson is done, the computer prints out a diagnostic report for the teacher. With a set of special instructions, the teacher can tell the computer "how he or she wishes particular subjects or students to be tutored."

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8 **Joyce, Bruce, and Showers, Beverly.** "The Coaching of Teaching." *Educational Leadership*, 40, 1 (October 1982), pp. 4-8, 10. EJ 269 889.

A good inservice program designed to develop a new teaching method should include a study of the theoretical basis of the method, observations of demonstrations by knowledgeable experts in the model, and practice and feedback using the new method in "protected" settings, such as in workshops or with easily taught students. Even inservice programs incorporating these procedures, though, often fail to alter actual teaching behaviors. What is lacking, say Joyce and Showers, is an important fourth element of successful inservice: the in-class "coaching" of teachers in the new method.

The authors recommend that schools develop a "coaching environment" in which "all personnel see themselves as one

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another's coaches." Coaches can be administrators, curriculum supervisors, or college professors. But the best in-class coaches are probably other teachers working on developing the same skills. Thus teachers should work in teams of two or more to provide companionship for the others, give technical feedback, help each other develop appropriate strategies, and adapt the new methods to the students.

To further emphasize their points on in-class coaching, the authors conducted an interview with football coach Rich Brooks of the University of Oregon. According to Brooks, getting football players to develop new skills requires a mix of theoretical explanations, demonstrations, and a lot of guided practice. The same principles apply to developing new teaching skills.

Brooks also gives this bit of encouragement to his new players, which the authors feel has great applicability to in-class coaching: "We'll generally make you worse before we make you better." In other words, the process of learning new skills requires "unlearning" some old skills first, with a clumsy period of transition between.

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9 **Ornstein, Allan C.** "How Good Are Teachers in Effecting Student Outcomes?" *NASSP Bulletin*, 66, 458 (December 1982), pp. 61-70. EJ number not yet assigned.

How can teachers be evaluated and helped to improve if there are no teacher behaviors that can be conclusively shown to benefit students? How can schools convince the public to provide adequate financial support if it can't be proved that the teachers are teaching effectively?

In this article, Ornstein analyzes the inability of researchers studying teacher effectiveness to establish with confidence the extent of the teacher's contribution to student learning. He describes a wide range of research suggesting that student achievement levels are primarily affected by genetic or environmental variables and that instructional variables have little or no effect on student outcomes. Other researchers, however, find strong relationships between selected teacher behaviors or characteristics and student outcomes.

Ornstein cites major reasons why, despite the extensive research, we still "don't really know" whether teachers make a difference. "First," he says, "there is disagreement over what effects a teacher is called upon to produce." Second, researchers have based their assessments of teacher effectiveness on the achievement gains of groups of students and have ignored the teachers' effects on the gains of individuals. Third and fourth, the terms and the variables used in the research have both been inconsistently defined. Fifth, it is difficult to distinguish the effects of one teacher from the effects of other teachers or agents.

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10 **Sergiovanni, Thomas J.,** Editor. *Supervision of Teaching.* Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1982. 207 pages. ED 213 075.

At times, it is beneficial to step back from the continuing battle for instructional improvement and take a broader and perhaps more objective view of the supervisory process. This ASCD yearbook provides just such a view. Its intent, according to Sergiovanni, is "to provide practitioners with better (more intellectually reasoned and sensitive) cognitive maps from which strategies of supervision can be developed," and to "improve the intuitions of supervisors so they might refine present practices and develop better ones."

The first part of this book briefly reviews the history of the supervisory process. Part two includes chapters on three different approaches to supervision—the "scientific," the "clinical," and the "artistic"—and a closing chapter by Sergiovanni that attempts to integrate these diverse perspectives into a more comprehensive theory of supervisory practice.

Part three discusses the "human" factors in supervision—in particular the personal and professional growth of both teachers and supervisors. An initial chapter argues that "growth and development of supervisors is the key to building a set of norms and a way of life in schools conducive to teacher growth and development." Other chapters discuss the collegiality of the teacher-supervisor relationship, the organizational climate most conducive to teacher improvement, and issues of racial and sexual prejudice that may hinder improvement efforts.

Teacher behaviors are not determined by the supervisor's intentions alone, of course. Both the curriculum and the norms of the school's bureaucratic structure profoundly affect the process of supervision. These "hidden" influences on the supervisory process are the topics of part four.

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11 **Troisi, Nicholas F.** *Effective Teaching and Student Achievement.* Reston, Virginia: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1983. 12 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

Most of the research on school and classroom effectiveness has focused on basic skills instruction in elementary schools. "Since there are significant organizational differences between elementary, middle, and secondary schools," warns Troisi, "generalizing from one level of research to another is at best problematic."

So that secondary school principals might have more reliable evidence to guide their own school improvement efforts, Troisi reviews only research conducted at the middle or senior high levels. He cautions, however, that "the small number of studies beyond the elementary level to date demand that our conclusions remain tentative."

Troisi surveys the findings of about twenty studies on teaching effectiveness, grouped under such categories as classroom

management, teacher expectations, a caring climate, learning time, and learning styles. The portrait of an effective secondary school teacher that emerges from this research strongly resembles the portrait drawn by the larger group of studies at the elementary level. For example, the effective teacher "identifies how each student learns best"; "exhibits high expectations for student achievement"; clearly communicates and consistently follows "rules, consequences, and procedures"; provides for a high rate of student success; "provides a role model for students by a businesslike approach to teaching"; and "monitors student performance during recitation or individual work sessions."

According to Troisi, "every study of effective schools" leads to the conclusion that leadership by the principal is the key that opens the door to academic learning and achievement. He cites a number of ways principals can help teachers "optimize student achievement." For example, the principal should "ensure that all members of the school community understand the importance of teaching"; "develop a follow-up system for students who are tardy, absent, or disruptive"; "create an atmosphere where staff members can openly discuss teaching with colleagues"; "provide student information to teachers"; and "encourage teachers to share their strategies for keeping students on task."

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12 **Westerberg, Tim.** "Mastery Learning for Teachers: A Competency Based Program for Improving Instruction." *NASSP Bulletin*, 67, 461 (March 1983), pp. 22-25. EJ number not yet assigned.

In traditional mastery learning programs, a specific set of learning objectives is determined, and then students work toward those objectives until all have achieved them. At Liberty (Missouri) High School, these same principles have been applied to the school's Teacher Improvement Project (TIP) with encouraging results. The first step in this project was the development of the learning objectives, which took the form of a fifteen-item priority list of effective teaching behaviors. Items included "goals and objectives are clear to the students," "the teacher is task oriented and academically focused," and "students are academically engaged (active learning time) for more than 70 percent of the total class time."

Next, criteria for demonstrating "mastery" of each behavior had to be developed. This was accomplished during an inservice day, according to Westerberg, the principal at Liberty High. He divided the staff into teams of ten, with each team responsible for developing the criteria and standards for three of the behaviors. This approach generated a feeling of teacher "ownership" for the project, Westerberg reports.

Teachers and administrators now work together on achieving mastery of the TIP objectives, starting first with those behaviors identified as building priorities. Profile sheets are maintained that serve as records of each teacher's progress toward the objectives. "There will be no failures," Westerberg concludes. "Every teacher can master every competency if the necessary time, feedback, and corrective actions are provided."

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13 **Yonemura, Margaret.** "Teacher Conversations: A Potential Source of Their Own Professional Growth." *Curriculum Inquiry*, 12, 3 (Fall 1982), pp. 239-256. EJ 267 059.

Most teachers spend most of their working lives interacting with children and only rarely engage in meaningful conversations with other colleagues about their work. This lack of intellectual stimulation causes teachers to think of their work, and themselves, in conceptually simple ways, says Yonemura. As a result, many teachers' classroom behaviors are guided not by consciously decided educational theories, but by sets of unconscious beliefs that have never been critically examined.

In this intriguing article, Yonemura outlines a program of structured conversations that helps teachers "bring their intuitive knowledge to consciousness for critical evaluation." The understandings teachers gain from this process help them develop more cohesive educational theories and, as a result, more effective teaching strategies.

Yonemura developed her program as a seminar for experienced classroom teachers. Each participating teacher finds another teacher in the same school willing to reflect on his or her teaching for one hour every week and to be observed on occasion by the participating teacher. At the seminar, the experienced teachers converse about their own teaching and that of the volunteer they worked with.

"The conversations," Yonemura emphasizes, "are not extemporaneous chats about teaching or top-of-the-head ventilating sessions." Instead, "They are serious examinations of and reflections upon the practices and underlying theories of one teacher to which another gives undivided and supportive attention."

Yonemura explains in detail how the program is run and how conversations are guided and structured. She also suggests how her methods might best be used by others, such as teacher supervisors or other school administrators.

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